

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
DRAFT MINUTES
January 6, 2017**

PRESENT: Chris Carley, Brad Hosmer, Councilor Fred Keach, Bill Norton, Tim Bernier, Claudia Walker, Stephen Heavener, and Councilor Byron Champlin

ABSENT: Councilor Brent Todd and John Hoyt

STAFF: Carlos Baía, Deputy City Manager - Development
Matthew Walsh, Director of Redevelopment, Downtown Services, and Special Projects
Donna Muir, Administrative Assistant

GUESTS: Heather Shank, City Planner

1. Approval of Minutes April 1, 2016 and June 10, 2016

Mr. Norton moved to approve the minutes of the April 1, 2016 and June 10, 2016 meetings. Mr. Hosmer seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Form-Based Code

Mr. Baía introduced the new City Planner, Heather Shank. He stated that reviewing form-based code is part of City Council's effort to improve the City's zoning ordinance and can reduce the need for variances.

Ms. Shank reviewed her power point presentation on form-based code, highlighting the following:

- Form-based code is a zoning tool that uses physical form, i.e., taking what neighborhoods look like now and building on that look
- Some of the basic elements of form-based code include setbacks, # of stories, building's location on the lot, streetscapes, treatment of sidewalks, façade, glazing, etc.
- Form-based code helps streamline development and integrates the existing code
- Form-based code is pedestrian focused
- Form-based code can reduce the need for variances as it spells out allowable variations

Some EDAC members explained that they were familiar with form-based code and discussion followed:

- Mr. Carley asked how form-based code provides for unexpected, but desirable changes and creativity. Ms. Shank stated that the both conventional and form-based codes need to be updated on a regular basis. In conventional zoning, uses are listed which doesn't allow for new types of businesses, as opposed to form-based code which doesn't specify uses, but the look of the buildings/lots. Communities need to have conversations to decide what they want to allow in the various neighborhoods or areas, such as allowing new modern buildings in certain

neighborhoods. Form-based code needs to be written to continue the feel of the area, such as continuing to require parking located in the back of the buildings, but not requiring all buildings to have granite or brick fronts.

- Mr. Carley suggested that developers will not be happy to hear that conversations with the community need to happen for a project to go through. Ms. Shank suggested that a market analysis, as well as community conversations would need to happen when developing the form-based code, not for each project. Mr. Carley said that the upgrades that were done to the downtown lend themselves to having a certain look. Ms. Shank suggested that the form-based code would be written specific for the different areas that would be affected. Mr. Baía explained that waivers could be built into the code to allow for creativity.
- Mr. Carley thinks that form-based code reduces the need for variances based on uses allowed in certain areas. The Zoning Board of Adjustment now bases their decisions as to what extent the change requested will affect the neighbors.
- Mr. Norton asked whether a trial area, such as Penacook, would be a good way to introduce form-based code to Concord. Ms. Shank explained that when she first began working with the City, there were some conversations about using form-based code in Penacook. She believes that all the areas that will be affected should be done at the same time, otherwise you are trying to insert new form-based code into an existing code.
- Mr. Bernier stated that issues will result regardless of what regulations are developed. The City talks about preserving and protecting neighborhoods while wanting growth and development. The City needs to work change that will allow for growth into the regulations, such as requiring neighborhoods surrounding the downtown to change their characters to become transitional areas. Ms. Shank thinks that form-based code is most useful for areas in need of revitalization, and that high pressure development areas are where it will be most interesting and most exciting. Form-based code will also be a great marketing tool for the City.
- Mr. Bernier stated that he doesn't think the City or the current zoning ordinances support the density required for change. Concord is not a young city and doesn't seem to care what happens in 30 years. Ms. Shank believes that density is what form-based code is all about; it is pedestrian oriented, mixed use development.
- Councilor Champlin stated that the Planning Board was favorably impressed with the concept of form-based code and its potential. Personally, he feels that there is a real challenge in preserving what makes this community attractive while wanting growth. We need to find some combination of policies that maintain our character while allowing for growth.
- Ms. Shank is in favor of overhauling the ordinance with a form-based code framework, which allows for change without ending up with a patchwork of ordinances. She thinks Concord is a gem and that there is a younger generation in Concord that may not be comfortable speaking up about what they want in their city. Mr. Heavener asked where that younger generation lives. There was discussion about the limited amount of current and new residential units in Concord that younger people are interested in. Councilor Champlin stated that Manchester is creating these small one-bedroom and studio apartments, with a streamlined process for permitting that allows these projects to be completed quickly. Ms. Walker stated that the former City Manager didn't want that type of development in Concord. Mr. Norton suggested that we need to get rid of the single family lots and that mentality about housing in Concord.
- Mr. Walsh suggested that the City doesn't have any buildings in the downtown area that you can drop 90 housing units into. There are only about ten current property owners in

downtown Concord and some of them don't want to do anything to change their property. He agrees that having form-based code will help.

- Mr. Carley sees form-based code as an opportunity that will promote flexibility. He suggested that the Opportunity Corridor from the proposed extension of Storrs Street to Commercial Street could be used to create a development plan using form-based code. He remembered that EDAC provided a similar recommendation about five or six years ago. Ms. Shank stated that the City has been talking about the Storrs Street extension with consultants to figure out where to put the road and connect it somewhere to open up development access to all the vacant land in that area, including access over the railroad tracks. Councilor Champlin said that another factor affecting the Storrs Street extension will be the footprint for the expanded Interstate 93 through Concord.
- Mr. Heavener asked where the City is as far as timing for form-based code. Ms. Shank stated that we are now in the educational phase. Mr. Baía stated that City Council has had conversations about improving zoning, but they haven't specifically talked about form-based code. Ms. Shank stated that she is looking to go to City Council for funding for a zoning overhaul for Fiscal Year 2018. Mr. Heavener suggested that the City could be missing out on opportunities that will be happening in other communities. Mr. Baía suggested that things are happening in Concord: the Economic Development Director position, the new Main Street, etc., which are all ongoing and creating synergy for Concord.
- Mr. Carley stated that he hopes the questions EDAC has brought up help get the information about form-based code out clearly. Ms. Shank stated that she has reviewed EDAC's prior recommendations and have included some of those recommendations in what is ongoing now in the educational phase. Mr. Norton asked her if she had any resources to see what the future demographics for Concord are. Ms. Shank replied that she hasn't looked, but thinks that it is a good idea. Suggestions were made for her to talk with Steve Norton, from the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy.

Mr. Carley thanked Ms. Shank for her presentation stating that it was very informative and that the status quo regarding zoning regulations is no longer desirable in Concord.

Mr. Baía asked EDAC if they had a consensus to keep exploring form-based code within the City of Concord. All members concurred.

3. Other Business

Mr. Baía explained that things continue to move forward with the Economic Development Director position. He stated that a firm was hired to national recruitment for the position. The first cut produced 31 applicants, of which five candidates were interviewed in person by a panel made up of City staff and community leaders. One of the candidates was promising, but withdrew for personal reasons. The recruitment firm and the City went back and looked at some of the other candidates that made the first cut. Two candidates were invited to have SKYPE interviews with City staff. After the interviews, one of the two candidates was asked to come to Concord for a face-to-face interview with the panel from the first round of interviews. That interview will take place at the end of January.

Mr. Heavener asked what the future of EDAC was. Mr. Carley explained that the Mayor has talked about creating ad-hoc task forces in lieu of current EDAC structure, but that the Mayor is waiting for the new Economic Development Director to be hired.

4. Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Donna Muir*

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